



Mesa United Way
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Mesa United Way, VISTA

2013

Mesa, Arizona

Federal Legislative District 5 & 9

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Congressional District(s): 5 & 9
State Legislative District(s): 25 & 26
Service Area by County/City: Mesa, AZ
Project Federal Share: \$99,158
Project Local Match: \$21,101
Community Volunteers Recruited: NA
Volunteer Hours Served: NA
Value of Volunteer Hours: NA

*2011 Independent Sector Rate for the Value of a Volunteer Hour in Arizona is \$20.08

Community Need

As a large city, Mesa, Arizona has diverse neighborhoods, including many that have significant poverty. The median household income for the entire city is \$51,284. Higher income areas can mask the real picture.

As a large city, Mesa also has many families that have currently serving servicemen/women and also veterans. Both the City and the Mesa Community College have been putting an increased emphasis on welcoming returning servicemen/women to the community, reintegrating them into school, work, and community service, and using the many skills they have gained to strengthen the community. Their focus is to obtain more resources and improve coordination and collaboration to achieve those goals.



The 2009 MORE for Mesa VISTAs assisted in the establishment of Helen's Hope Chest. Since then, Helen's Hope Chest has provided more than 15,000 children and youth living in foster homes with free clothing, school supplies, holiday gifts, books, and hygiene items.

Program Activities

Mesa United Way believes that there are additional opportunities to collaborate to strengthen vulnerable populations and fight poverty in Mesa. In the first year, it will bring together the City of Mesa, including the Veterans Affairs Task Force; Mesa Community College; Mesa United Way; and other engaged parties to work on issues involving veterans. These will include, but are not limited to: reintegration into the community, promoting education of veterans, and using veterans' skills to improve the community. In addition, the initiative will focus on students who are significant risk of failure as they enter community college. These individuals may or may not be veterans. Finally, the City will engage new volunteers, including veterans, to work in neighborhoods with significant poverty. Their work will strengthen individuals, families, and entire neighborhoods. In subsequent years, if appropriate, the collaboration may extend to additional partners whose mission is consistent with the goals of the project.

Program Impact

Helen's Hope Chest (HHC), a service of Mesa United Way, was started in late 2009 by two "experienced adults" (55+) who were serving through Mesa United Way's MORE for Mesa VISTA program. In 2010, its first full year of operation, HHC served approximately 1,400 children in foster care with "regular" service (clothing, shoes, school supplies, etc.) and an additional 1,400 with holiday gifts. In 2011, there were just over 2800 who received regular service and approximately 1400 received holiday gifts. In 2012, over 3800 children/youth received "regular" service and just over 1700 received holiday gifts. Our numbers for 2013 are running ahead of those for 2012; we anticipate serving more than 6,000 children/youth, in total. More than 90% of the children/youth served come from Maricopa County. Most of the remaining children and youth come from parts of Valley that are in Pinal County (e.g. Apache Junction, Maricopa, and San Tan Valley). Approximately 20% of the children/youth come from Mesa ZIP codes.

Mission

Uniting Community. Inspiring Donors. Improving Lives.

Vision

A community of people that energizes, inspires, and cares for one another.

National Priority Area and Program Performance Goals

Veterans and Education: The City of Mesa Human Relations Advisory Board created a subcommittee to look at ways that Mesa can be more supportive and inclusive of veterans in the community. Based on information gathered by the task force, there is a need to better identify and access resources for veterans in the City of Mesa. The Veterans Task Force is made up of the following groups that identified a need for a 'One Stop Shop' in Mesa: Disabled American Veterans, East Valley Veterans Education Center, Arizona Coalition for Military Families, Arizona Veterans and Military Leadership Alliance, AZ Dept. of Veterans Services, and City of Mesa Housing Services. The VISTA member would serve as lead coordinator to research and develop a strategy based on the continued recommendations of the task force.

In the first year, the VISTA member is expected to research and develop strategies based on the recommendations of the Veterans Task Force. Additional work aspects include: conducting a Community Needs and Assets Assessment report, establishing partnerships with local and regional services, creating a list of resource links for veteran services on the City of Mesa webpage, and securing contacts or resources that serve veterans in the Mesa area. In addition, during the second year, the VISTA member can begin working with community partners to find a location to open a 'One Stop Shop' for veteran resources in Mesa, as well as maintain the resource list on the City web page. By the third year, we hope to have the 'One Stop Shop' opened, and the VISTA member working to maintain a successful center for veteran resources.

Partnerships

City of Mesa
Mesa Community College

Other Information

VISTA Volunteer Dr. Judith Lawrence is working diligently to connect with at-risk students at Mesa Community College to confirm student participation in the Connect 4 Success Program for the Spring 2014 Semester. Over 178 students have enrolled thus far in Connect 4 Success. By the start of the Spring 2014 semester it is anticipated that this number will have tripled.

History

Though the legal name has changed with the times, Mesa United Way has a local history extending back to 1921 when it was known as "The Welfare League." Today, it is one of more than 1,200 local United Way agencies across the nation, all of which are dedicated to strengthening the safety-net of essential human services within their respective communities. Each United Way is an independent, autonomous agency, joined by common objectives and strategies through participation in member-agency associations at the state, national and international levels. Historically best recognized by the public as a centralized fundraising organization, over the past decade many United Way agencies have significantly expanded their missions to include other forms of support for community service organizations. This includes promoting collaborations that increase the capacity of community members to care for each other. Mesa United Way recognizes the power of synergy and collaboration (having a whole that is greater than the sum or its parts) in combating the causes of poverty. To that end, Mesa United Way has very strong relationships with the City of Mesa, the Corporation for National and Community Service, Mesa Public Schools, the East Valley Institute of Technology, Mesa Community College, and Arizona State University, as well as with other social purpose organizations in the community.



Helen's Hope Chest is designed with a boutique-like setting where children and youth in foster homes can come with their caregiver or caseworker to "shop", free of charge.